1999

Environmental Assessment for Wild Horse Gathering Outside Wild Horse Herd Management Areas

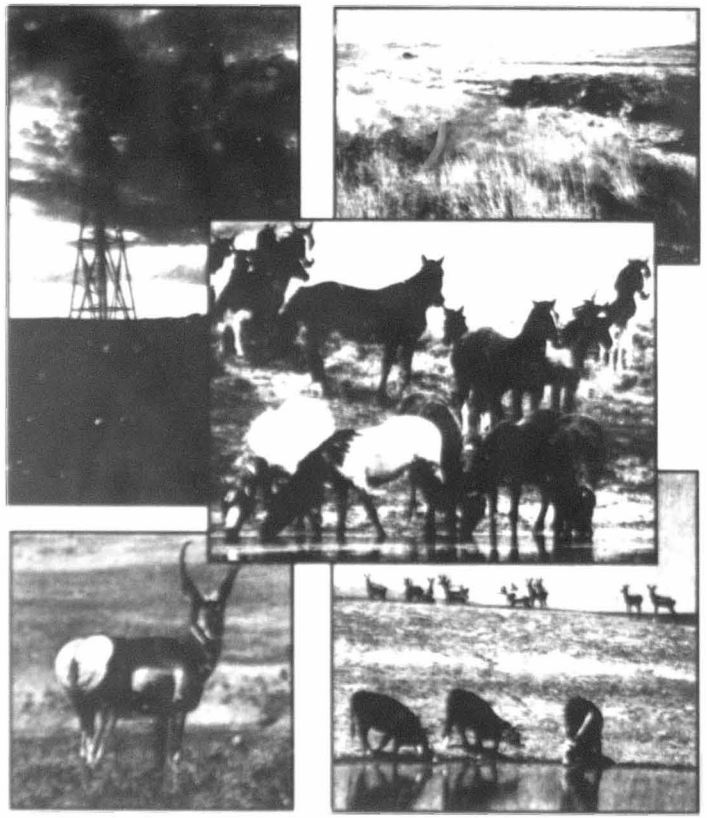
United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wyoming State Office

Rawlins Field Office

May 1999

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT for Wild Horse Gathering Outside Wild Horse Herd Management Areas



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BLM/WY/PL-99/019+1060

WY-030-EA9-156

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Rawlins Field Office
P.O. Box 2407 (1300 North Third Street)
Rawlins, Wyoming 82301-2407

4700

June 1, 1999

Dear Reader:

Enclosed is the environmental assessment (EA) which describes impacts of gathering stray wild horses in the Rawlins Field Office (RFO). Wild horse gathers would take place outside herd management areas (HMAs) within the Rawlins Field Office. This EA is being distributed to the public for a 30-day public review and comment. Comments on the EA are due by July 1, 1999. Please send your comment to:

BLM - Rawlins Field Office
ATTN: Wild Horse Gathers
P. O. Box 2407
Rawlins, WY 823010-2407

Comments may also be e-mailed to: Mike_Calton@blm.gov or Chuck_Reed@blm.gov.

Comments, including the names and street addresses of respondents will be available for public review at the above address during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except federal holidays). Comments may also be published as part of the Decision Record. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from public disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as a representative or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection.

Your comments will be considered before BLM issues the final decision.

The Bureau of Land Management conducted public scoping on this action starting in early March and ending April 12, 1999. The Rawlins Field Office received one comment letter identifying issues and concerns. Two other letters were received that identified concerns and issues throughout the state. Those issues brought forth have been considered in the attached EA. In addition, a February 8, 1999, meeting addressed the use of helicopters and motor vehicles, and accepted other comments on wild horse gathering. These comments have also been considered in the attached EA. The Rawlins Field Office received no other substantive comments.

The enclosed EA serves as the basis for complying with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. This action is in conformance with existing land use plans, including evaluations of Herd Management Areas (HMAs) since that time.

This EA is available at the Rawlins Field Office in Rawlins, Wyoming, and in the Wyoming State Office in Cheyenne. If you have any questions, please contact Chuck Reed, Resource Advisor, at (307) 328-4213 or Mike Calton, Range Management Specialist, at (307) 328-4210.

Sincerely,

Kurt J. Kotter
Field Manager

Enclosure

2

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

WILD HORSE GATHERING
OUTSIDE WILD HORSE HERD MANAGEMENT AREAS

EA Number WY-030-EA9-156

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
RAWLINS FIELD OFFICE, WYOMING
SWEETWATER AND CARBON COUNTIES
WYOMING

MAY 1999

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I: Introduction . . . 5
A: Need for the Proposed Action . . . 5
B: Conformance With Land Use Plan . . . 6
C: Public Scoping and Public Meeting . . . 6

II: Description of Proposed Action and No Action Alternative . . . 7
A: Proposed Action . . . 7
B: No Action Alternative - Do Not Gather - Postpone Gathering Operations . . . 8

III: Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail . . . 8
A: Closure of Area to Livestock Use or Reduction of Permitted Livestock Use . . . 8
B: Fertility Control . . . 8
C: Alternate Gathering Methods . . . 8

IV: Affected Environment . . . 9
A: Critical Elements of the Human Environment not Affected by the Proposed Action or the Alternatives . . . 9
B: Location of Proposed Action . . . 10
C: Climate . . . 10
D: Topography . . . 10
E: Surface Water Resources and Flood plains . . . 10
F: Soils . . . 11
G: Vegetation . . . 11
H: Wildlife . . . 11
I: Wild Horses . . . 12
J: Domestic Livestock . . . 13
K: Fencing and Other Range Improvements . . . 13
L: Cultural Resources . . . 13
M: Recreation and Transportation . . . 13

V: Environmental Consequences . . . 13
A: Impacts of the Proposed Action . . . 13
B: Impacts of the No Action Alternative . . . 17

VI: Mitigation Measures and Monitoring . . . 18
A: Mitigation Measures . . . 18
B: Monitoring . . . 18

VII: Residual Impacts . . . 19

VIII: Cumulative Impacts . . . 19

IX: Consultation and Coordination . . . 19
A: Introduction . . . 19
B: Distribution . . . 19
C: List of Preparers/Reviewers . . . 21

X: Glossary . . . 21

Map 1 . . . 22
Map 2 . . . 23
Appendix A . . . Attachment
Appendix B . . . Attachment

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
WY-030-EA9-156

I. Introduction:

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the welfare of wild horses. The wild horse program is under constant scrutiny by the public for actions concerning wild horse management and gathering. Within the Rawlins field office (RFO) there is a substantial acreage of "checkerboard" lands. Approximately 50 percent of these lands are BLM-administered public lands and 50 percent are private lands controlled by many private entities. The northern portion of the gather area contains this type of land pattern.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to continue to implement decisions to remove wild horses that have strayed from herd management areas (HMAs). Decisions were based upon the analysis completed in Wyoming BLM Environmental Assessment (EA) WY-037-EA4-122, "Management Changes in the Wild Horse HMAs." The EA titled, "Management Changes in the Wild Horse HMAs," evaluated management recommended by the "Wild Horse Herd Management Area Evaluation." These two documents were completed in 1994 after an intensive monitoring effort in the HMAs. Establishment of Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) occurred with this public process. Adjustment of HMA boundaries occurred as well. Adjustments included combining the Flat Top and Adobe Town HMAs.

This analysis/assessment (EA# WY-030-EA9-156) evaluates effects of gathering and removing wild horses that have strayed from HMAs onto private and public land within the Rawlins field office. This EA covers the period beginning July 15, 1999, through project completion. It considers the February 1999 inventory and bases the estimate of the number of stray wild horses on these population figures. The Rock Springs Capture plan (Appendix A) guides all gathering operations in the Rawlins field office.

A. Need for the Proposed Action:

Public Law 92-195 (Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971) as amended by Public Law 94-579 (Federal Land Policy and Management Act), and Public Law 95-514 (Public Rangelands Improvement Act) mandates the BLM to protect, manage, and control wild free-roaming horses and burros on public lands. Gathering of stray wild horses is consistent with the mandate in Section 4 of the Act that states, "If wild free-roaming horses or burros stray from public lands onto privately owned land, the owners of such lands may inform . . . an agent of the Secretary, who shall arrange to have the animals removed." Section 3(b)(2) states when " . . . an overpopulation exists on a given area of the public lands and that action is necessary to remove excess animals, he shall immediately remove excess animals from the range. . . ."

The proposed action also complies with existing regulations. According to 43 CFR 4720.2-1, " . . . the authorized officer shall remove stray wild horses and burros from private lands as soon as practicable . . ."

As provided in 43 CFR 4700.0-6, parts a-c, BLM's policy for management of wild horses is to: a) " . . manage as self-sustaining populations of healthy animals in balance with other uses and the productive capacity of their habitat; b) . . . considered comparably with other resource values; and c) . . maintaining free-roaming behavior." Priority shall be given to removing wild horses from private lands when the landowner submits a written request to BLM for their removal.

Inventories of wild horse populations in and near the Adobe Town HMA occurred in February of 1999. This inventory identified the continued presence of stray wild horses in areas outside the Adobe Town HMA. Currently wild horses are outside the Adobe Town and Salt Wells HMAs in areas where significant amounts of private lands exist. Summaries of the inventories are contained in a Rawlins field office wild horse program memorandum dated March 30, 1999. Appendix B is a summary of 1999 wild horse census data. The BLM has received requests from private landowners that these animals be removed. Over ten requests have been received by the Rawlins field office during the past year. Wild horse gathers and removals would meet current laws, regulations, and fulfill previous decisions.

Area	Inventory FEBRUARY 1999	AML Range	Planned Removals*	Estimated Populations (After Gathers and Foaling)**
Adobe Town HMA	685	610-800 (700)	None	820-950
Outside HMAs - South of Interstate 80	330	0	200-400	0-200

*Planned removals are estimates including foals born since the inventory. If horses are not removed this year, gathering operations would continue in the summer, fall and early winter months until horses are removed from this area. No spring gathers would be authorized by this EA. Significant changes in circumstances or environment would require an updated analysis.
**These estimations include possible returns of wild horses, possible gathers in coordination with areas outside HMAs and estimated foaling rate. Approximately eighty horses removed from the gather area would be released into the Adobe Town HMA.

The proposed action would limit wild horse distribution to HMAs, respond to specific requests for removal of wild horses from private lands, and prevent damage to private and public lands. Establishment of HMAs occurred under the planning process and HMAs were modified after evaluation and analysis in 1994. Refer to EA# WY-037-EA4-122 mentioned above.

B: Conformance With Land Use Plans:

The proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5. Any action is subject to the Great Divide Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved November 8, 1990. Actions proposed on page sixty-three of the RMP include " . . . protect, maintain, and *control* a viable healthy herd of wild horses . . . " (Emphasis added). The proposed action would help control the number of stray wild horses near the Adobe Town HMA.

The action would also be in conformance with the Great Divide Herd Management Area Evaluation and associated EA (WY-037-EA4-122). Recommendations from this evaluation were the catalyst to increase AMLs from previous horse population levels and adjust HMA boundaries. Rangeland conditions have not changed significantly since 1994. Changes to HMA boundaries or AMLs are beyond the scope of this analysis and will not be discussed further. The proposed action is consistent with all other federal, state, and local plans. The proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with Appendix III of the RMP - *Standards for Healthy Rangelands and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management*. Standard and Guideline conformance reviews for allotments within the gather area and the Adobe Town HMA are complete or have been scheduled. No additional permits or authorizing actions are required.

C. Public Scoping and Public Meeting:

A public hearing on the use of helicopters and motorized vehicles during calendar year 1999 was held at the Rock Springs Field Office on February 8, 1999. There were no public concerns expressed for the summer/fall gather or the use of helicopters. Most comments made at the public meeting concerned the proposed 1999 spring gather. A separate environmental analysis will address spring gathers.

In March 1999, BLM issued a scoping letter seeking comment on the proposal to gather stray wild horses in the Rawlins field office. The comment period closed April 12, 1999. The Rawlins field office received one letter identifying issues and concerns. Two additional letters were received by the BLM which identified concerns and issues throughout the state. The letter received by the Rawlins field office was from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Issues identified include:

Support removal of stray "feral" horses that have strayed outside HMAs.
Say that these removals would benefit wildlife.
Suggest that horse numbers in the Adobe Town HMA are above "population objectives".
That the proposed removals "will not remove even the equivalent of one year's production."

The February 1999 inventories indicate that the Adobe Town HMA wild horse population is within AML. Data shows that as the Adobe Town HMA population increases, horses stray outside HMAs. Wild horses can and do move between the Adobe Town and Salt Wells HMAs. Overall, the wild horse population in this area is above the

total AML for the area. Along with gathers planned in the Rock Springs Field Office area, the proposed removals would be more than the estimated foaling rate.

The BLM received another letter from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department which identified issues on all proposed gathers within the state. The issues identified include:

Support effort to maintain wild horse numbers at population objectives.
Include a comparison of methodologies for data collection and population modeling.
Analyze implications of wild horse numbers over objective and the cost to other resources.

The Fund For Animals, Inc., sent the BLM a letter which identified issues for all proposed gathers within the state. Issues identified include:

Analyze full range of alternatives including changing AMLs, removal of cattle, and implementing fertility control.
Discuss criteria used to arrive at AMLs for HMAs.[1]
Discuss reliance on a District Court Order to rule out alternatives.[2]
Analyze previous removals and impact on livestock AUMs.[3]
Predator control activities in HMAs.[4]
Discuss RMP decisions and specific impacts on wild horse management in HMAs.[5]
Analyze fertility control measures available.[6]

Discuss age/sex structure and genetic viability in wild horse herds.
Discuss selective removal policy/criteria and impacts from implementing.
Discuss potential impacts of removal/transportation/holding operations on pregnant mares and foals and how horses are treated at the holding facility.
Define "thriving ecological balance" and the role of wild horses and cattle.
Discuss the number of livestock, wildlife, and wild horses in HMAs at different times of the year and analysis of habitat use of the various animals.
Location and condition of watering areas and which species use them during the year.
Analyze the methodology used and information gathered from rangeland and resource inventories, and monitoring.
Discuss weather patterns, climatic conditions and the impact on wild horses, wildlife, vegetation production, water levels, and winter kill.
Discuss implementation of the *Strategic Plan for Management of Wild Horses on Public Lands*.
Identify trap locations and impacts from construction and operation activity.
Discuss the impact of helicopter use on wild horses and other wildlife in the HMAs.
Impacts from terrain and weather conditions during round-ups on wild horses.

[1] - Analyzing alternatives identified in the comment letter is beyond the scope of this analysis.
[2] - No District Court Orders affect the proposed action or alternatives in the Rawlins field office.
[3] - Previous removals have no bearing on the current proposal. The reason that BLM is proposing to remove wild horses is because of their reproduction success.
[4] - Predator control activities on public lands are administered by the APHIS-WS.
[5] - See Great Divide Resource Management Plan Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements for a discussion of impacts on wild horses due to planning decisions. This EA tiers off this RMP.
[6] - Fertility control has not been considered because development of the vaccine is in progress. Broad-based application of this technique has not been approved. Use of fertility control will be considered in a separate analysis. Moreover, present technique for administering fertility control requires that horses be gathered. Also fertility control is only an option within Herd Management Areas (see Section III-A).

Unless otherwise noted, the issues identified above, within the mandates of the law, regulations, and land use plan decisions, have been considered in this EA.

II. Description of Proposed Action and No Action Alternative:

A: Proposed Action:

The proposed action is to remove stray wild horses outside HMAs and south of Interstate 80 (See map 1). All gather, capture, removal, and transport of wild horses would follow procedures outlined in the Rock Springs Capture plan (Appendix A). This capture plan not only covers capture methods, it procedures to reduce stress to the wild horses during capture, transportation, and the possible need for humane destruction of old, sick, lame, or injured animals. Gathering operations would use helicopters. Wild horses which do not meet selective removal guidelines

would be released into an HMA. The proposed action would be in conformance with the current selective removal policy established in Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 99-053.

Removal of all stray, wild horses located outside the Adobe Town HMA and south of Interstate 80 (within the RFO) is possible, but unlikely. If completely successful, approximately 400 wild horses would be removed from areas outside HMAs. After capture, BLM would identify which of these wild horses would be adoptable and which are unadoptable according to current selective removal policy. An estimated 20-40% of the horses would be considered "unadoptable". Unadoptable horses would be placed into the Adobe Town HMA. Ideally, returned wild horses would be placed a distance from gathering areas to reduce the likelihood of wild horses quickly returning to familiar areas outside the HMA. All gathered wild horses removed would be considered "excess" as Adobe Town HMA wild horse populations would remain at or above the AMLs. Direct relocation of wild horses into the Adobe Town HMA is possible. As unadoptable wild horses would be returned to the Adobe Town HMA, the actual wild horse population should increase over the normal, expected rate of growth. This action may increase the wild horse population within the Adobe Town HMA by approximately 10% over normal growth rates. If this is the case, the Adobe Town HMA would require a gather in the year 2000 to remain within AML.

Gathers would occur no earlier than July 15, though preliminary operations such as trap building and locating wild horses may occur before then. Gathers would continue until all horses are removed from areas outside HMAs. Wild horse gathering would not occur after December until and unless analyzed under a separate environmental document. The April through June shutdown for foaling would remain in place. Actual gather dates and wild horses gathered would be dependent on weather, ability to place and move traps, and wild horse health. Gathering operations may include supplemental inventories.

B: No Action Alternative - Do Not Gather - Postpone Gathering Operations:

Under the no action alternative, wild horses would not be gathered outside HMAs in the Rawlins field office this season. Wild horses would continue to use private lands. Wild horse populations outside established HMAs would continue to increase at approximately 20 to 23% per year (see Table 7, of Great Divide HMA Evaluation, page 25, Flat Top area). It is unlikely that many wild horses would relocate into the Adobe Town HMA as inventories show that wild horses continue to move out of the Adobe Town HMA as the population expands. It is also unlikely that many wild horses would relocate into the Salt Wells HMA due to the high numbers of wild horses already in this HMA. Migration between HMAs would continue.

The no action alternative would not be consistent with 43 CFR 4710 and 43 CFR 4720, or the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 as described in the Need For the Proposed Action section. The no action alternative would not meet existing law, regulation, policy, nor would it concur with previous decisions.

III. Alternatives Considered But Not Analyzed in Detail

A. Closure of Area to Livestock Use or Reduction of Permitted Livestock Use:

Livestock permittees have allocations for grazing use on public land in the proposed gather area. Since this area is outside all HMAs, and as it includes private lands, closure or reduction of permitted livestock use of this area to provide additional habitat for wild horses would be contrary to 43 CFR 4710.4. Much of the area includes significant amounts of private land whose owners have requested that wild horses be removed. This alternative would not meet existing law, regulation, policy, nor would it concur with previous land use decisions.

B. Fertility Control:

Fertility control is not an option in this area as complete removal of wild horses is needed, rather than population control. This option would only be valid within HMAs.

C. Alternate Gathering Methods.

Other known methods used to gather wild horses are inefficient and time-consuming compared with the proposed action. The proposed action could use some of these methods, particularly roping with helicopter support, together with helicopter trapping (see gathering plan - Appendix A). But as primary gathering methods, these methods are ineffective. As primary gathering methods, these alternatives pose greater potential for stress and danger to horses and personnel. It is possible that it would take years for these methods to remove the stray wild horses. Due to the time needed, beneficial impacts of gathering would not accrue as quickly. Cost to gather horses would increase greatly as well. Explanations of these alternatives are below.

1: Gather Wild Horses Using Saddle Horses Without Helicopter Support:

This method of capturing wild horses involves constructing traps in locations where natural barriers and terrain play an extremely important role in helping to funnel the wild horses into the trap. Riders locate and drive wild horses into a trap. The success of this method depends on many factors including terrain, the nature of the wild horses, the distance herded, the number of riders on the drive, and the skill of the riders. This alternative differs from the proposed action as no helicopter would herd wild horses and there would likely be more trap sites. The number of traps and lack of efficiency would increase costs.
This alternative as a primary method of gathering wild horses, increases the risk of injury to the rider and saddle horse. Injuries could occur away from vehicles, delaying treatment. It is also not likely that many wild horses could be captured.

2: Roping Wild Horses Using Helicopter Support:

The helicopter/roping method of gathering entails moving wild horses to a roping site by helicopter and then capturing the horses by roping. This is feasible in limited circumstances where a few wild horses are difficult to trap. This method is a supplemental method used in the proposed gathering operations. As the primary or as the only method of gathering horses, it poses many problems. These problems include greatly increased safety hazards to wild horses and personnel and their saddle horses. This method would not be effective for this area, increasing costs associated with the gather.

3: Water Trapping:

This alternative involves building traps around key water sources. When wild horses come to water, the gate is shut manually, mechanically, or electronically. The success of this method depends on locating the trap in an area where no other water sources are available or most available water sources also have traps. Location of trap sites would take in the same considerations for cultural resources and sensitive species as the proposed action. If water is lacking, restricting water may be detrimental to wildlife and livestock. As natural water sources often include riparian zones, impacts to these areas would increase as compared to the proposed action. There are several water sources in areas where wild horses congregate. Rain and snow showers will increase the available water dramatically, limiting the period this method would be effective.

4: Hay Trapping:

Hay trapping is similar to water trapping except that hay is the bait rather than water. This method provides more latitude in trap location than does water trapping. Only certified weed free hay would be used in trapping operations.

To be successful, trapping must happen when forage is generally scarce. These conditions may occur during high-snowfall winters or during severe, prolonged drought. Adequate snow cover for successful hay trapping occurs rarely in this area. And when it does, access to trapping areas is restricted by snow drifts and road conditions. Approximately two consecutive years of drought might deplete forage resource to the point where hay trapping would be feasible. Last years (1998) forage production was good. There is no assurance that snowfall would be adequate for this type of gathering operation this fall and winter. Total forage should be adequate, or possibly plentiful, depending on spring precipitation. This action would not be effective as the primary gathering method, though in limited circumstances, it may be used in conjunction with helicopter herding.

IV. Affected Environment:

A. Critical Elements of the Human Environment not Affected by the Proposed Action or the Alternatives:

The proposed action, removal of wild horses from areas outside HMAs, could impact soils, vegetation, wildlife, domestic livestock, cultural resources, recreational users, transportation, and wild horses. Placing additional wild horses into the Adobe Town HMA could have an effect on the Adobe Town WSA.

The following critical elements of the human environment and other potential concerns were considered but were determined not to be affected nor impacted by the Proposed Action and will not be discussed further in this EA:

-Non-attainment areas for air quality
-Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

-Ground/drinking water quality or sole source aquifers
-Geologic hazard areas
-Environmental justice issues
-Prime and unique farmlands
-Native American concerns
-Wild and scenic rivers
-Hazardous waste or material sites

Climate, topography, surface waters, and range improvements would not be affected by the proposed action. However, these elements would affect gathering operations and are described below.

B: Location of Proposed Action:

The proposed action would occur south of Interstate 80 and west of Highway 789 within Rawlins field office boundaries. This area includes portions of Townships 12 to 19 North, Ranges 92 to 96 West of the Sixth Principle Meridian. The area is south of Wamsutter, Wyoming and northwest of Baggs, Wyoming. The total area is approximately 580,000 acres of which about 380,000 acres are public and 190,000 acres are private, and 10,000 acres are state. Distribution of wild horses in this area is not even. Gathers would likely occur near Delaney rim, along North Barrel Springs draw, east of Flat Top mountains, and Powder Rim. Returned horses would be placed into the Adobe Town HMA (see map 1).

C: Climate:

The climate is typical of a high elevation, cold desert. Winters are typically dry and long-lasting. Springs and early summers typically provide most precipitation events, often as snow. Late summer and fall are typically dry. Temperatures range from well below zero to the nineties. Average yearly precipitation is between seven and eight inches in a year. Exceptions include Delaney Rim that averages eight and a-half inches per year, Powder Rim where average annual precipitation is nine to eleven inches, and the southeast corner where average annual precipitation is ten to twelve inches. Gathers would be restricted by weather factors including precipitation events, winds, and seasonal conditions.

BLM rain gauges in the area include Tipton, Man and Boy, Creston, Echo Springs, Mexican Graves, Willow Creek, Powder Rim-A, Powder Rim-B, Powder Rim B-Cedars, Powder Rim-C, Powder Rim D, Oppenheimer, Poison Buttes, and Poison Buttes-Cedars. There are National Weather Service stations at Wamsutter, Wyoming on the north side of the area and at Baggs, Wyoming, just southeast of the area. The Wamsutter station averages about six and one-half inches of precipitation and averages about 41 degrees Fahrenheit. The Baggs station averages eleven inches of precipitation and about 42 degrees Fahrenheit.

D: Topography:

Delaney Rim, the Flat Top Mountains, and Powder Rim dominate much of the area where gathers would occur. Drainages near possible gather areas include North Barrel Springs Draw, Barrel Springs Draw, Coal Gulch, Windmill Draw, South Barrel Springs Draw, Blue Gap Draw, Robbers Gulch, Little Robbers Gulch, Sand Creek, and West Fork Cherokee Creek. Gathers may occur near Mexican Flats as well.

Elevation where gathers may occur range from 6500 feet near Robbers Gulch to 7822 feet at north Flat Top Mountain. Most drainages flow into the Colorado River Basin via Muddy Creek. Drainages from Powder Rim flow into the Colorado River Basin through Sand Creek and the Little Snake River. Some drainages in the north drain into the Great Divide Basin. It is unlikely that gathers would occur in the Great Divide Basin drainages. Topography greatly affects placement of traps.

E: Surface Water Resources and Flood plains:

Most of the area where gathers are likely to occur drain into ephemeral streams that flow into Muddy Creek. These include Barrel Spring Draws, Windmill Draw and Robbers Gulch. These drainages can carry much water during spring runoff and after storm events, but are typically dry much of the year. During flow periods, these waterways contain large amounts of sediments. Winter runoff, spring storms, and summer thunderstorms also fill water holes in the area. When small, temporary water sources fill, they often draw wildlife, wild horse, and livestock use away from other sources. Flowing water may restrict timing of gathers after thunderstorms or other precipitation events.

F: Soils:

Soils vary from sandy loams to heavy clays. Due to the arid climate, many soils in this area generally lack high vegetative cover. The existing vegetative cover needs to remain in place to continue the geologic process of soil development. This cover prevents raindrops from directly impacting the soil surface and slows runoff and erosion. Factors affecting soil development include elevation, aspect, precipitation, and snowdrift patterns. Soils in the area typically lack profile development due to the arid climate. As a result the soils lack structure and are highly susceptible to erosion. The affected areas contain soils that are dominantly in the order of Entisols and Aridisols.

Drainages and stream bottoms have accumulated silts and clays in alternate layers of varying texture. These soils are more resistant to wind erosion but are very susceptible to head cutting by water movement. Riparian areas will typically have deep clay loams or deep sandy loams. Varying amounts of soluble salts occurs in soils of this area. In some soils, the levels of soluble salts affect soil management (reduced infiltration of water, limitation of nutrient availability, and reduction of water that is available to plants). Additional descriptions of soils can be found in the Divide Grazing Draft EIS pages 46 and 47.

G: Vegetation:

1. Upland:

Major vegetation types within the area include sagebrush-grasslands, grasslands, greasewood flats, and saltbush flats. Major vegetative species include Thickspike wheatgrass, Bluebunch wheatgrass, Bottlebrush squirreltail, Indian ricegrass, Needle and thread, Prairie junegrasss, Sandberg bluegrass, Aster, Phlox, Milkvetch, Buckwheat, Indian paintbrush, Big sagebrush, Black sagebrush, Gardner saltbush, Winterfat, Rubber rabbitbrush, Green rabbitbrush, Shadscale, Black greasewood, and Spiny hopsage. Wild horses generally prefer perennial grass species including Sandberg bluegrass, Needle and thread, and Indian ricegrass, as forage. Shrubs, including saltbush, Black sagebrush, and Winterfat are more important with winter conditions.

2. Riparian:

Riparian vegetation is extremely limited in scope throughout the area, existing primarily at scattered springs and reservoirs. Riparian environments are even more limited in areas where gathers are likely to occur. While not extensive, riparian zones are an important resource for wildlife, wild horses, and livestock. Management considerations often emphasize these areas.

3: Threatened and Endangered Vegetative Species:

Gibben's Beardstounge (Penstemon gibbensii) occurs in the Powder Rim allotment and just west of North Flat Top mountain, including a portion of South Flat Top allotment. Contracted Indian ricegrass (Oryzopsis contracta), similar to Indian ricegrace may occur throughout the area. Large-fruited bladderpod (Lesquerella macrocarpa) may occur in barren areas in higher elevations. Starveling milkvetch (Astragalus jejunus variety jejunus) may occur on barren areas throughout the area.

H: Wildlife:

Wildlife are an integral part of the environment. Wildlife which use this area include pronghorn antelope, mule deer, elk, sage grouse, rabbits, raptors, prairie dogs, coyotes, mountain lions, and other birds, mammals and reptiles.

1: Big Game:

The area is winter, year-long range for antelope. Powder Rim and the area around Dad are crucial winter ranges for antelope. Powder Rim is also crucial winter range for Mule deer. The rest of this area is winter, year-long Mule deer range. There is minimal competition between antelope, deer, and wild horses for forage. There is more competition for forage during the winter with deer and antelope, especially on crucial winter range. Elk use the Powder Rim area though seasonal ranges are not identified. There is competition between elk and wild horses the entire year.

During periods of crusted snow conditions, wild horses will break through the snow for forage. This increases forage availability to big game species. Elk, deer, and antelope have been observed following and feeding behind bands of wild horses.

2: Sage Grouse:

Sage grouse leks can be found northwest of Baggs, in Mexican Flats, around Red Lakes, Barrel Springs, and south of Delaney Rim. Many leks occur southwest of Creston where gathers are unlikely. Gathers could be disruptive to strutting and nesting activities of Sage grouse. These activities primarily occur from March 1 to June 30. These gathers would not begin until July 15 and no spring gathers would be authorized by this EA.

3: Raptor Nests:

The Delaney Rim raptor concentration area and the Blue Gap raptor concentration area are close to areas where gathers are likely. The Muddy Creek raptor concentration area is also in this general area, but where wild horse gathers are unlikely. Identified raptor nests in the area where gathers are likely include Golden eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Prairie falcon, Ferrugineous hawk, Great horned owl, Burrowing owls, and Kestrels. Long eared owl and Northern harrier nests exist in areas where gathers are unlikely. Gathering operations could be disruptive to active raptor nests. Gathering operations would avoid raptor nests. Also, most gathering operations authorized by this EA would be completed after the February 1 to July 31 dates when raptors are most active.

4: Sensitive Species Habitat including Threatened and Endangered Species:

The Ferrugineous hawk is a sensitive raptor that occurs in the area. Other sensitive raptors that may occur in the area include the Northern goshawk, Peregrine falcon, and Bald eagle. The Mountain plover is a sensitive species of bird that could occur on upland habitat. This species is likely to be listed as an endangered species soon. The Loggerhead shrike is a sensitive bird that could occur in and near Juniper woodlands of the area, such as Powder Rim. The Long-billed curlew, White-faced ibis, and the Black tern are sensitive bird species that use riparian or other wet areas. The Pygmy rabbit may occur where dense, tall stands of sagebrush exist.

I: Wild Horses:

Affected wild horses are currently outside the Adobe Town and Salt Wells HMAs. These wild horses would be considered excess as the Adobe Town population is within the Appropriate Management Level. Unadoptable wild horses would be placed into a HMA, most likely the Adobe Town HMA. The net result to the Adobe Town HMA would be an increase in the wild horse population.

The normal breeding period runs from March through September each year but peaks around late June. The peak of foaling of wild horses is on or around June 1. For planning purposes, this office uses the June 1 date. To reduce stress to foaling wild horses, no gathers occur from early April through June. The proposed July 15 beginning date is well outside this window.

Wild horses in this area likely have many domestic bloodlines in their background including American Quarter Horse, Thoroughbred, Standardbred, and Arabian. Nearly every coat, color, pattern, and combinations thereof can be found within the herds. The diverse phenotypes of wild horses in this area indicate a varied genotype. Habitat conditions are such that the horses are typically in good condition throughout the year.

Wild horse bands typically include a stallion, lead mare, mares with colts, mares without colts, and subordinate males. Bachelor bands (bands of wild horses without any females) are found in this area as are single wild horses that are typically male. Within an area, bands may develop lead and subordinate roles. Subordinate bands are also known as satellite bands. This relationship is observable by their behavior at water holes. The wild horses competitive social structure, combined with their size and strength, allows them to compete favorably with wildlife and domestic livestock for water.

Wild horses travel up to 10 miles to water, although two to five mile distances is more common. An adult wild horse normally consumes 10 to 12 gallons of water per day, depending primarily on ambient temperature and the animal's activity. Wild horses usually have adequate water from winter snows and spring runoff that fill reservoirs and intermittent streams. During late summer and early fall wild horses depend on the few perennial sources of water (some reservoirs, streams, springs, and flowing wells) and on wells pumped for domestic livestock and wildlife. The concentration of wild horses around available water becomes a problem when water is scarce. Wild horses may become possessive of available water, resulting in direct competition with livestock and wildlife. Mountain lions may prey on wild horses.

J: Domestic Livestock:

Rangelands in the subject areas provide seasonal grazing for livestock (cattle, sheep, and horses). The seasons of greatest competition between cattle and wild horses are summer and early winter.

Fencing is primarily used to keep livestock in proper allotments during specified seasons of use. Livestock water includes springs, wells, intermittent and ephemeral streams, pipelines and reservoirs. Sheep use snow in the winter as a water source.

Grazing allotments that were identified as having wild horses or which wild horses likely occur include Tipton, North Barrel, North LaClede, South LaClede, Mexican Graves, South Barrel, Mexican Flats, Big Robber, Big Robber Spreaders, South Flat Top, Flat Top Section, Powder Rim, and Cherokee Trail. Other grazing allotments in the area include Oppenheimer, Poison Butte, Forty-Four Ranch, Cottonwood Hill, Little Robber, Spreader, Dad, Ranch, Headquarters Ranch, George Dew, Doty Mountain, Echo Springs, Coal Bank Wash, Lazy Y-S Ranch, and South Wamsutter. Fences are along all allotment boundaries. Powder Rim, Oppenheimer, South Barrel, South LaClede, Lazy Y-S Ranch, and Tipton allotments also have pasture fences. Allotments just inside the Adobe Town HMA include Powder Mountain, Adobe Town, Grindstone Springs, Rotten Springs, Sand Creek, Red Creek, Continental, and Willow Creek.

K: Fencing and Other Range Improvements:

A significant amount of fencing exists in the area. All allotments have fences, and the South Barrel, Powder Rim, South LaClede, Tipton, Lazy Y-S Ranch, and Oppenheimer allotments also have pasture fences. To gather safely, effectively and efficiently, fences may need temporary modification to allow clear horse passage. This area also contains many developed water sources. Maintenance of these water sources is typically done by livestock operators.

L: Cultural Resources:

Intact portions of the Overland trail are in the area. The Cherokee trail may have passed through this area. Other cultural resources and natural history exist throughout most of the affected area. Most of this relates to the prehistoric sites and the Overland and Cherokee Trails. A detailed description is in the Medicine Bow-Divide RMP/Draft EIS, pp. 99-102. There are no known Native American religious sites in this area.

M: Recreation, Wilderness, and Transportation:

Dispersed recreation, primarily hunting, is a major use of this area. People do observe wild horses as a primary recreation activity or as part of other activities. Wild horse viewing primarily occurs within established HMAs. Adobe Town HMA and the Salt Wells HMA are next to areas proposed for removal. Removal of wild horses from the proposed area including private land would not eliminate nor seriously limit this opportunity. Adoption of a wild horse or horses provides the opportunity for a more in-depth, up-close, and long-term recreational experience for interested and qualified members of the public. Wild horse adoptions have become locally important social events in some areas. The gathering area contains no wilderness nor wilderness study areas (WSA). The Adobe Town HMA, where unadoptable horses would be released contains the Adobe Town WSA.

Carbon county road 700 travels west of Baggs into the area. Carbon county road 701 and Sweetwater county road 23, the Wamsutter-Dad road, goes through the area. It is very unlikely that gathers would occur east of the road. There are many BLM roads in the area. These include Stratton road (#3310), a road along Delaney rim (#3313), the Standard road (#3315), the Robbers Gulch road (#3316), the Windmill Draw road (#3317), the Skull Creek Stock driveway (#3318), a road near Red creek (#3327), a road along Powder Rim (#3330), a road near Cherokee creek (#3331), and the Eureka Headquarters road (#3336).

V. Environmental Consequences:

A: Impacts of the Proposed Action:

Resources possibly impacted by the proposed action include soils, vegetation, wildlife, wild horses, domestic livestock, cultural resources, recreation, wilderness, and transportation. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts are addressed for each resource.

1: Soils:

Minor soil displacement would occur at traps sites during construction and during gathering operations. Noticeable displacement of soil would be limited to areas within pens. The hooves of horses, both wild and domestic, running through the site would impact areas of the trap within the wings. All impacts of gathering would be primarily short-term. Released wild horses would increase impacts of wild horses in HMAs. These impacts should be minimal over the short-term, however if horse populations exceed AMLs for an indefinite period, impacts would become consequential.

2: Vegetation:

Released wild horses would increase wild horse impacts to vegetation within HMAs, including upland, riparian, and sensitive species. These impacts should be minimal over the short-term, however if horse populations exceed AMLs for an indefinite period, impacts would become consequential.

a: Upland:

Trap construction and wild horse helicopter herding from the original location to the trap wings would only slightly disturb the vegetation. When the wranglers on horseback begin to herd the wild horses (approximately the last ¼ mile) and the wild horses' pace increases, disturbance to vegetation would increase. This disturbance would be greatest between the wings of the trap and in the pens. The disturbance would be less than five acres and one AUM per trap. Trap sites would be located in areas where wild horses run. In areas where only twenty horses are found for approximately half of the year, over 120 AUMs would be saved.

Frequently, more runs would occur at one trap site. The second and subsequent bands or runs would disturb some areas disturbed during the first run. Therefore, the disturbance is not directly additive or proportional to the number of runs. Vegetative impacts would be short term. After gathering is complete, the vegetative resource should begin to improve both in quality and quantity. Forage is not allocated to wild horses in areas outside HMAs. Removals would reduce competition and improve resource conditions.

b. Riparian and Sensitive (T & E) Vegetative Species:

Trap sites would avoid riparian areas and known populations of sensitive plants. As helicopter herding would be done at the wild horses pace, disturbance during this period of gathering should not affect either riparian zones or sensitive plant species.

The removal of wild horses would benefit riparian zones. Competition for water, space, and forage among grazing animals is significant in riparian areas. Removing wild horses would lessen this competition.

3: Wildlife, Including Sensitive Species:

Where gather operations occur, wildlife could experience short term disruptions. Once gathering operations cease and the gathering crew leaves the area, these effects would stop. There would be no long term adverse effect on wildlife. Short term effects, including human presence and helicopter noise, would cause wildlife to seek cover in areas next to gathering routes. It would not cause abandonment of normal habitat areas.

After removals, forage and general habitat condition would improve in these areas, especially around water sources. This would benefit both game and non-game wildlife. Gathers would not adversely affect sensitive wildlife species. Gathers would occur after nesting and brooding seasons for most birds, including sensitive species.

Released wild horses would increase wild horse impacts to wildlife within HMAs. These impacts should be minimal over the short-term, however if horse populations exceed AMLs for an indefinite period, impacts would become consequential.

4: Wild Horses:

Gathered horses would originate in regions outside HMAs. All gathered wild horses would be adopted or placed into an HMA. Wild horses would be placed under stress during the capture operation. Stress related adverse impacts during gathering operations are typically minor. We anticipate no long term adverse impacts to the wild horses.

Late-term abortions in mares would likely be insignificant to nonexistent as gathers would occur after July 15. Most wild horses would have foaled weeks before this date. Foals may be separated from their mothers during gathers. Separation would be higher during midsummer gathers than during fall, winter, or spring gathers. If foals could not keep up with the gathered band, the mare would be left behind with the foal. For this area, these horse would need to be gathered or relocated again.

Helicopters would herd wild horses no more than ten miles to the trap and would not cause significant stress to the wild horses. Typically, bands would be herded less than five miles to a trap. During helicopter herding, wild horses would travel at their own pace until they are about ¼ mile from the trap. When the animals are within ¼ mile of the trap and approaching the wings of the trap, they would be herded by wranglers on horseback at a faster pace. Experience has shown that this method of herding has not caused significant injury or stress to the wild horses, though some injuries and even deaths have occurred. Experience has shown that this number would be less than one percent of wild horses gathered.

Highly visible post and jute wings, about 100 to 200 yards in length help funnel the wild horses into the trap. Wild horses can see these jute wings and avoid running into the jute or posts. Jute reduces the frequency of collisions to an insignificant level. If hit by a horse, the jute is flexible, allowing the horse to escape uninjured. The number of herding runs conducted in a day would vary depending on the size of individual bands. Three to five herding runs may occur in a day. The number of horses captured per day is dependent on many variables including transport equipment, wild horses in the area, weather, distance to holding facility, and sorting methods.

Wild horses typically are held in the trap until they are loaded on trucks for transportation to a central holding facility, likely at Rock Springs. Transporting wild horses from the trap to the central holding facility would cause some stress to the animals. Transportation of wild horses would be done in a manner and at a speed that would allow wild horses to keep their footing during the trip, minimizing opportunities for injuries. Use of wood shavings on flooring would provide more secure footing. All trailers and stock trucks would be loaded loosely enough to ensure that if a horse did fall, it would have enough room to regain its footing. Minor injuries such as scrapes, bites, and bruising are likely to occur during gathering and transporting. Based on experience, injuries should be minimal, even to pregnant mares and their progeny.

If sorting of wild horses is done at central holding facilities, it would reduce stress on the wild horses compared with sorting at the trap site. The services of a veterinarian would be available at the central holding facility. Skilled, experienced personnel would be involved in the gathering operations and transportation of the wild horses. Some sorting of animals may occur at the trap. Sorting in the field would reduce the stress of transportation for released horses, yet would increase possibility of injuries. Released horses would need transportation to an HMA. Procedures as explained in Appendix A would be used when sorting in the field to reduce injury potential.

Removed wild horses would undergo a lifestyle change but the stress period would not be long. The wild horse is an adaptable animal, readily domesticated with proper handling.

Releases of wild horses would be near available water. Usually, wild horses gathered together would be released together. If the area is new to them, a short term adjustment period would be required while the wild horses become familiar with the new area. The release of wild horses gathered near the Adobe Town HMA into the Adobe Town HMA would not impact the genetics of the Adobe Town herd. The gathered horses originally came from the Adobe Town area. We anticipate no long term adverse impacts to returned wild horses.

Released wild horses would increase inter-band encounters and confrontations. These encounters should not be detrimental over the short-term, however if horse populations exceed AMLs for an indefinite period, impacts would become consequential. These consequences would be born both by the horses and nearby landowners as wild horses would again move outside HMA boundaries.

Net population of wild horses in the Adobe Town HMA would increase as most unadoptable wild horses would be released into this HMA. It is possible that some unadoptable wild horses would be released into other HMAs. Population modeling would not be applicable to areas outside HMAs as horses are not authorized in these areas.

a: Sex Ratios:

Selective removal has typically increased the ratio of male wild horses to female wild horses. Prior to selective removal, most herds seem to have a 53:47 ratio favoring females. The Adobe Town HMA has been gathered using selective removal policy and it would be expected that the ratio of males to females has increased somewhat in this herd. Where all horses 5 years and younger are removed, the sex ratio may be adjusted to around 50/50. Previous selective removal criteria used in earlier gathering efforts called for the release of all horses over the age of nine. Under this criteria, the sex ratio was skewed more toward males than it is under current policy. This effect is somewhat mitigated by several factors:

* Increased males in the population increases the likelihood that fertile mares will be bred and can result in smaller average band size. This not only results in increased reproduction rates but also decreases the potential for inbreeding;
* Research has shown that older mares are more fecund and successful at raising their foals than are younger mares; and
* Large herd size (AML) dilutes these effects.

This impact would not be further mitigated in the Adobe Town HMA as no horse removals would occur in this area. Rather, only returned horses would be placed here. It would be possible to return some younger horses. Yet, due to the low ratio of returned horses to the HMA horse population, the release of young horses would not be significant to the population dynamics of the herd. Returned horses from Salt Wells HMA gather operations may eventually relocate in the Adobe Town HMA. This may increase this impact slightly.

b: Age Structure:

In most herds that have not been selectively gathered for some time, the approximate age structure may be broken down as follows:

Age Class 0-5:	60-70 percent of herd
Age Class 6-20+:	30-40 percent of herd

Returns would increase the average age in the Adobe Town HMA slightly. Recent winters have been comparatively mild, which may have prolonged the life of some older horses. A small-scale increase in mortality of older horses may occur in the next normal or severe winter. The loss of these individuals to the population will be short-term as it is unlikely that many of these animals are still reproductively active. Also, new foals will more than make up this loss of older animals.

5: Domestic Livestock:

With wild horse removal, one would expect an improvement in the quality and quantity of forage. This would provide greater opportunity for improved range conditions within the related areas. Forage for wild horses is not allocated in areas outside HMAs. A complete analysis of livestock grazing and grazing impacts in this area is found in the Divide Grazing EIS. Grazing in this area is also addressed in the Great Divide RMP.

The possibility exists that domestic livestock would become spooked by the running wild horses and/or the helicopter. Then, livestock would be subject to short-term stress and possible injury.

Released wild horses would increase wild horse impacts to domestic livestock within HMAs, including disruption at water sources. These impacts should be inconsequential compared to existing impacts over the short-term. If horse populations exceed AML for an indefinite period, impacts would become significant and detrimental.

6: Cultural Resources:

A Class III cultural resource inventory will be performed for each trap site. All National Register eligible properties will be avoided. There will be no effect on historic properties. Released wild horses should have no effects on cultural resources.

7: Recreation, Wilderness, and Transportation:

The public would continue to have the opportunity to view wild horses in HMAs following gathers. Wild horse adoption events and adopted wild horses provide additional recreation opportunities. There would be some disruption and inconvenience to hunters near trap sites during hunting seasons. Impacts to resources in the Adobe Town WSA are addressed in the soils, vegetation, wildlife, domestic livestock, and wild horse sections. This action may increase the horse population within the HMA by 10%. The actual increase within the WSA would be difficult to estimate and would be dependent on release sites and other factors. There should be no impacts to intrinsic wilderness values. Existing roads would experience a very short-term increase in use during gathering operations.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

Under the no action alternative, horses would not be gathered. Wild horses would continue to use private lands. Wild horse populations outside established HMAs would continue to increase at approximately 20 to 23% per year. The latter figure is derived from the 1994 evaluation of the old Flat Top HMA. It is unlikely that wild horses will relocate into the Adobe Town HMA as inventories show that wild horses continue to move out of the Adobe Town HMA. The no action alternative would not meet existing law, regulation, or policy.

Impacts to the described environment, both positive and negative, would not change over the short-term. Resources possibly impacted by the no action alternative include soils, vegetation, wildlife, wild horses, domestic livestock, and recreation. Cultural Resources, wilderness values, and transportation resources would not be affected by the no action alternative over the short term. Impacts to the described environment would not change over the short-term.

Current BLM regulations require that all public lands be evaluated to determine if they meet rangeland health standards. There are six standards for Wyoming public lands involving water, air, wildlife, riparian, soils, and uplands. Copies of these standards are available at any Wyoming BLM office. The no action alternative would likely cause areas to not meet rangeland health standards as addressed in 43 CFR 4180.2. Specifically, standards 1, 2, and 3, dealing with soils, watershed, riparian areas, wetlands, and upland vegetation would be affected negatively. Eventually standard 4, concerning wildlife would be affected negatively. Spring 1999 gathering operations were canceled. A postponement of gathering past the 1999 summer/fall season would increase the opportunity for negative effects described above.

1: Soils:

Current impacts by horses would continue over the short term. These impacts include localized detrimental effects to soil resources. Over the long term impacts would increase to the point where detrimental effects to soil resources would become widespread. This would be exacerbated by the increased competition for forage between wildlife, domestic livestock, and wild horses. Currently, livestock use is typically less than could be allowed, partially due to wild horse use.

2: Vegetation, Including Upland, Riparian, and Sensitive (T & E) Species:

Current impacts by horses would continue over the short term. These impacts include localized detrimental effects to upland and riparian vegetative resources. Over the long term impacts would increase to the point where detrimental effects to vegetative resources would become widespread. This would be exacerbated by the increased competition for forage between wildlife, domestic livestock, and wild horses. Currently, livestock use is typically less than could be allowed, partially due to wild horse use. It is unlikely that the no action alternative would adversely affect sensitive species.

3: Wildlife, Including Sensitive Species:

Current impacts by horses would continue over the short term. These impacts include localized detrimental and beneficial effects. Detrimental effects include competition for forage and water resources. Benefits include localized and occasional breaking of snow by wild horses which allows easier wildlife access to

forage during winter months with significant snowfall. Over the long term adverse impacts would increase to the point where detrimental effects to wildlife would become widespread. This would be exacerbated by the increased competition for forage between wildlife, domestic livestock, and wild horses. Beneficial impacts of wild horses would not increase significantly and would eventually be offset by overuse of the forage resource.

4: Wild Horses:

Wild horses would continue to use private lands. Wild horse populations outside established HMAs would continue to increase at approximately 20 to 23% per year (see Table 7, of Great Divide HMA Evaluation, page 25, Flat Top area). It is unlikely that many wild horses would relocate into the Adobe Town HMA as inventories show that wild horses continue to move out of the Adobe Town HMA as populations expand. It is also unlikely that many wild horses would relocate into the Salt Wells HMA due to the high numbers of wild horses already in this HMA. Continued migration between HMAs would continue.

The increasing wild horse population would cause overcrowding conditions in areas outside the HMAs. These horses would continue to look for new areas to locate. These areas would typically include large amounts of private land.

The increased populations in the areas would increase stress to horses as they compete with one another for space. This would increase injuries to individual horses as fighting and competition increases. Also, competition for resources such as water, would increase. During periods of dry weather, water may become scarce enough to be detrimental to horses. Sex ratios and age structures of wild horse herds would not be affected by this action.

5: Domestic Livestock:

Currently, livestock operators are not activating all authorized AUMs. The Powder Rim allotment is an example of what is occurring in many allotments outside HMAs. During the summer of 1998, the BLM conducted a review of the Powder Rim allotment to decide if it met the Wyoming Standards for Rangeland Health. The BLM review team found that this allotment met all but the riparian standard. However, it was evident that additional activations of summer cattle AUMs would cause unacceptable upland vegetation and watershed conditions. This activation could result in these standards not being met. With full use by livestock operators and continued increasing wild horse use, standards would not be met.

Current impacts by horses would continue over the short term. These impacts include localized detrimental effects. Detrimental effects include competition for forage and water resources. Over the long term adverse impacts would increase to the point where detrimental effects to livestock would become widespread.

6: Recreation:

The public would continue to have the opportunity to view wild horses in HMAs as well as in areas outside HMAs. Some viewing may be restricted as trespassing on private land may not be allowed. Fewer horses would be available at adoption events. Eventually, detrimental effects to wildlife would affect hunters and other individuals who enjoy wildlife.

VI. Mitigation Measures and Monitoring:

A. Mitigation Measures:

Compliance with the planned actions in the attached capture plan (Appendix A) precludes the necessity for additional mitigation measures involving wild horse gathers and transportation.

B. Monitoring:

Current monitoring would continue including climatic data, utilization, allotment supervision, actual use reports, trend photo-points, and wild horse population inventorying. All types of monitoring do not and would not occur every year but depend on priorities, time and funding. Most monitoring in this area involves livestock grazing as the area is outside established HMAs. Climatic data includes BLM rain gauges read four times a year and National Weather Service stations at Wamsutter and Baggs. Utilization is an estimate of percentage of forage removed from an entire plant. This method is typically done in specific area of allotments where overuse may be a concern. Allotment

supervision is a simple and quick method of recording observations and occurs once a year, when possible. Actual use reports show how the allotment was actually used. Trend photo points show general condition and shifts in trend over time. Establishment of new photo points is not part of the proposed action. Wild horse population inventories such as the one conducted in February would continue approximately every three years. Other monitoring may be considered.

VII. Residual Impacts:

Since no additional mitigation measures are proposed, no additional impacts other than those described above under the Environmental Impacts section are expected.

VIII. Cumulative Impacts:

Plans for gathers in the Salt Wells Creek HMA are addressed in EA# WY-040-EA9-041 (available at Rock Springs office). The Rock Springs office would coordinate all gathers. Wild horse populations in the Salt Wells and Adobe Town HMAs would remain above or at AML. Competition between cattle, wildlife, and wild horses for forage and water would increase somewhat within the Adobe Town HMA.. Negative impacts to vegetation, riparian areas, and soils would increase in the Adobe Town HMA as well as areas outside the HMA. These impacts would become significant over time.

IX: Consultation and Coordination:

A: Introduction

A public hearing on the use of helicopters and motorized vehicles during calendar year 1999 was held at the Rock Springs Field Office on February 8, 1999. There were no public concerns expressed over summer/fall gathering operations or the use of helicopters. Most of the comments concerned spring gathering in 1999, which was canceled. Future spring gathering operations will be addressed in a separate analysis.

B: Distribution:

This EA will be distributed to the public and a press release will be issued in the local media informing the public that the EA had been prepared. The EA will be made available for a 30-day public comment period. The EA is available at the Rawlins field office and in the Wyoming State Office in Cheyenne. The EA will be distributed to organizations and individuals, including:

1: Federal Government:

U. S. Senator Craig Thomas
U. S. Senator Mike Enzi
U. S. Representative Barbara Cubin
Bureau of Land Management, Wild Horse & Burro NPO
Natural Resource Conservation Service (Baggs)

2: State, County, and Local Government:

Little Snake Conservation District
Planning Coordinator/Clearinghouse
University of Wyoming - Carbon County Cooperative Extension Service
Wyoming Game and Fish Department (State Office and following)
- Habitat Protection Program
- Lands Administration Branch
- Bill Rudd
- Tim Woolley

3: Organizations Primarily Interested in Wild Horses:

American Baskir Curly
American Horse Council, Inc.
American Horse Protection Association
American Humane Association
American Mustang and Burro Association

American Mustang Association
Animal Protection Institute of America
Burro Rescue-Rehab-Relocation-ONIS
Carey Ranch WHB Sanctuary
Colorado Horse Rescue
Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Coalition
Doris Day Animal League
Ecological Heritage Foundation
Friends of the Mustang
Fund for Animals
Humane Equine Rescue and Development Society
Humane Society of the United States
IDA
International Striped Horse Association
International Society For the Protection of Mustangs and Burros
LIFE Foundation
Middle Tennessee Mustang Association
Mustang Inc.
National Wild Horse Association
National Mustang Association
National Wild Horse and Burro Show
Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
North American Mustang Association and Registry
Northwest Colorado Wild Horse Association
Pacific Wild Horse Club
Project Equis
Pryor Mountain Mustang Association
Public Land Resource Council
Wild Horse Organized Assistance
Whole Horse Institute

4: Other Organizations:

A L Land and Cattle Company
Adams and Adams
Four-Mile Sheep
P. H. Livestock Co.
John Peroulis and Sons
Raftopoulos Brothers Livestock
Rock Springs Grazing Association
Salisbury Livestock Co.
Sheehan Ranches
Smith Rancho Inc.
Society For Range Management
Stratton Sheep Co.
Three Forks Ranch
Three Mill Iron Ranch
Wyoming Section of the Society for Range Management

5: Individuals:

Trina Bellack
James L. and Patricia Ann Chan
Kelly Crane
Elizabeth Dietz
Lloyd A. Eisenhauer
George R. Evans
Pat Fazio
Laurie J. Hamilton
William H. Jolley
Lee and Donna Jons

Chadwick W. McBurney
Andy Peroulis
Rodger J. and Margaret Pilgrim
Jim Ross
Mike Sheehan
Eliza Solace

C: List of Preparers/Reviewers

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Thor Stephenson	Rangeland Management Spec.	BLM - Rock Springs
Ron Hall	Supervisory NRS	BLM - Rock Springs
Gary DeMarcay	Archeologist	BLM - Rawlins
Larry Apple	Wildlife Biologist	BLM - Rawlins
Susan Foley	Soil Scientist	BLM - Rawlins
Teri Deakins	Environmental Protection Spec.	BLM - Rock Springs
Don Glenn	Range Management Specialist	BLM - WY State Office
Joe Patti	Planning Specialist	BLM - WY State Office
Mary Apple	Public Affairs Specialist	BLM - Rawlins
Vic McDarment	Wrangler Foreman	BLM - Rock Springs
Tom Enright	Range Management Specialist	BLM - WY State Office
Jim Williams	Corral Manager/Wrangler	BLM - Rock Springs
Bob Anderson	Wrangler	BLM - Rock Springs

X: Glossary:

APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT LEVEL (AML): The optimum number of wild horses that provides a thriving natural ecological balance on *the public* range.

BAND: A group of wild horses running together or a lone wild horse.

CHECKERBOARD LANDS: Lands on both sides of the Union Pacific Railroad (running in an east-west direction across the district) where alternating sections are public and private lands. When different colors are used to show the land ownership in the area on a map, the map resembles a checkerboard.

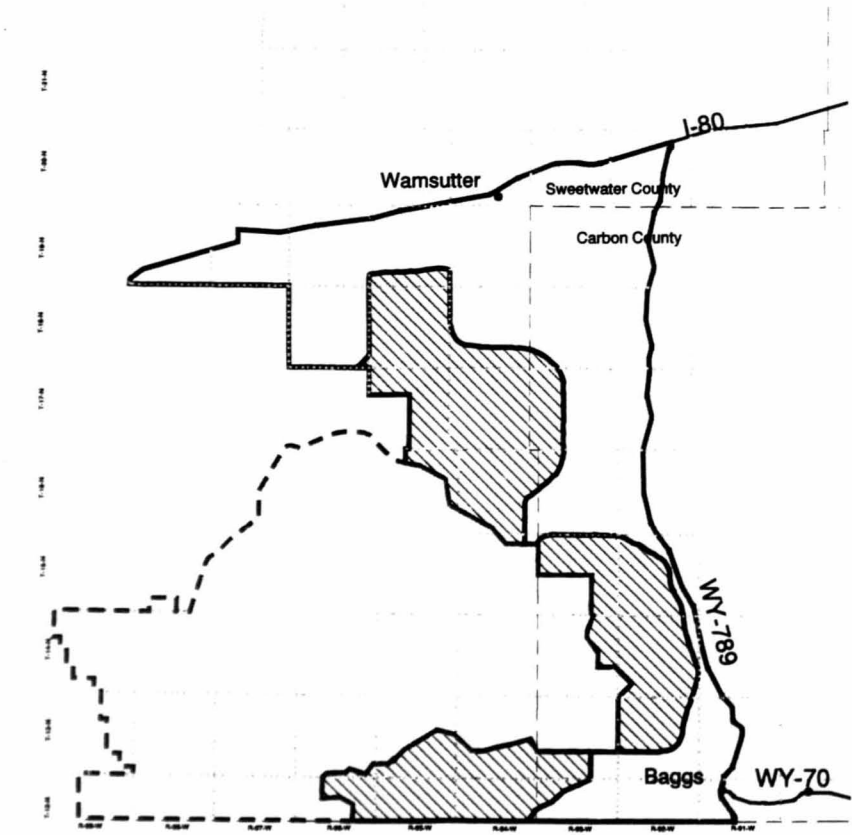
EXCESS WILD HORSES: Wild free-roaming horses which have been removed from public lands or which must be removed to preserve and maintain a thriving ecological balance and multiple-use relationship.

STRAY WILD HORSES: Wild free-roaming horses which are not located within a herd management area.

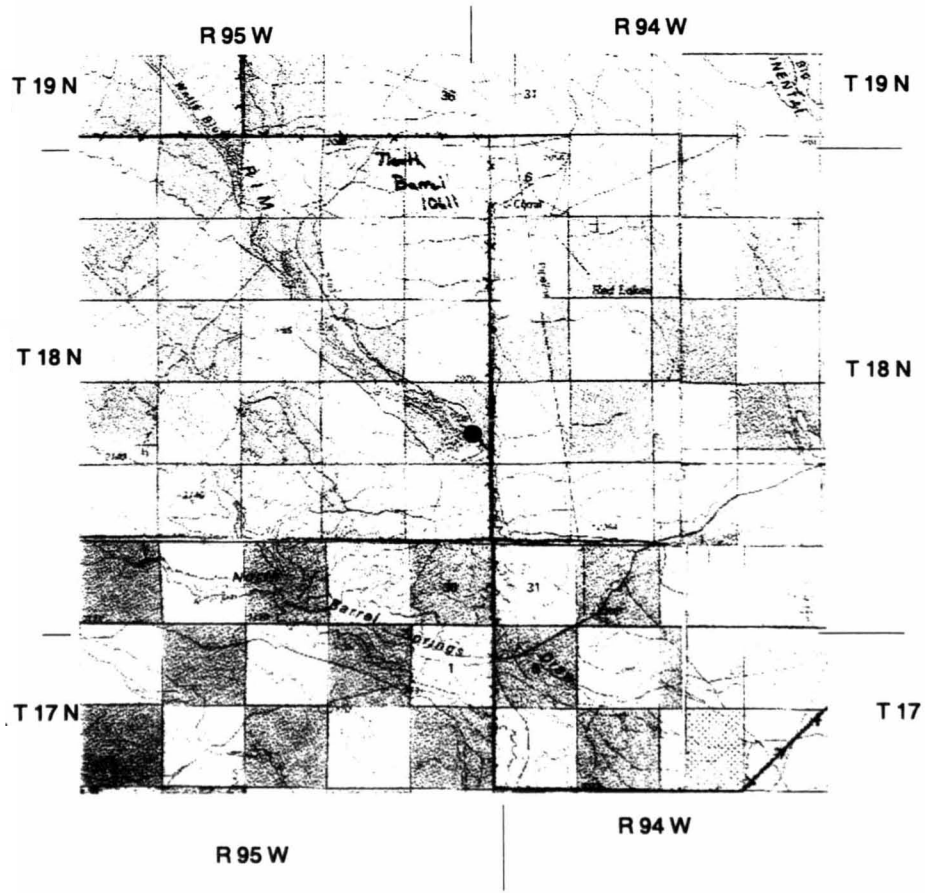
THRIVING NATURAL ECOLOGICAL BALANCE: An ecological balance requires that wild horses and burros and other associated animals be in good health and reproducing at a rate that sustains the population, the key vegetative species are able to maintain their composition, production and reproduction, the soil resources are being protected, maintained or improved, and a sufficient amount of good quality water is available to the animals.

WILD HORSE HERD MANAGEMENT AREA (HMA): A designated area where a viable population of wild horses is to be maintained. An appropriate management level for wild horses is established to manage the wild horses on the public rangelands.

HMA/HORSE GATHER AREAS



East Delaney Rim Wild Horse Trap



Appendix A

APPENDIX A

WILD HORSE CAPTURE PLAN 1999
ROCK SPRINGS and RAWLINS FIELD OFFICES, WYOMING

Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to outline the methods and approaches to gathering 2,550 wild horses and removing approximately 1,750 from both private and BLM-administered lands in the Rock Springs Field Office area, and approximately 400 excess wild horses from both private and BLM-administered public lands in the Rawlins Field Office area. These wild horses will be gathered from inside four wild horse herd management areas (HMAs), and from area located outside the HMAs known as the North Baxter/Jack Morrow Hills area in the Rock Springs Field Office area and from the area outside of HMAs south of Interstate 80 in the Rawlins Field Office area. Selective removal policy would apply and those wild horses not selected for removal would be released in the Great Divide Basin HMA (Rock Springs Field Office area) or the Adobe Town HMA (Rawlins Field Office area).

BLM Committed Measures

Cultural resource clearances would be conducted prior to actual gathering operations. BLM Archeologist would be notified if any cultural resources are discovered during gathering operations. Appropriate action would be determined at that time.

Trap sites would be surveyed and cleared for threatened, endangered, candidate, and sensitive plant and animal species prior to construction.

Removal operations would be in accordance with selective removal guidelines. However, implementing selective removal criteria would not be applied if the sex ratio is skewed to the point where herd viability is affected.

Gathering operations would avoid active raptor nests.

Trap sites would not be located on or near sage grouse habitat during breeding or nesting periods.

Trap sites would not be constructed in riparian or wetland areas.

Traps would not be constructed in Wilderness Study Areas.

Existing roads and trails would be used. No roads would be constructed.

Operations would not occur when it is so wet that resource damage would occur. Should resource damage occur while conducting gathering operations, it would be reclaimed in accordance with BLM reclamation procedures.

If needed, only certified weed-free hay would be used during gathering operations.

Blood samples of some released wild horses in each HMA will be collected for typing and DNA analysis. This baseline data will be compared against samples collected every 5 years to determine if population sizes are effective.

Capture Methods

Helicopter Drive trapping will be the primary capture method. Throughout the years, this has proven to be a safe, effective, and humane method of gathering wild horses. This technique has been in use in Wyoming since June 1, 1977. Use of helicopters is in conformance with Section 9 of Public Law 92-195 which states "...the Secretary may use or contract for the use of helicopters or, of the purpose of transporting captured animals, motor vehicles...such use shall be undertaken only after a public hearing...." A public hearing took place February 8, 1999.

Selective Removal of wild horses will be based on current Selective Removal Policy as established in Instruction Memorandum 99-053 (see Appendix C). Horses 5 years old and under will be selected from inside HMAs for removal. Once the AML is achieved the balance of the younger horses along with those not selected for removal would be returned to their respective HMAs.

Wild horses gathered from outside HMAs would be selected based on the following criteria:

Age 0-9 Female - remove all for adoption.
Age 0-7 Males - remove all for adoption.
Age 10+ Mares - release all as specified in EA.
Age 08+ Studs - release all as specified in EA.

All wild horses aged 5 and under would be placed in the adoption system. Horses aged 6 and over would be placed in training and then into the adoption system.

Herding and Stress Reduction Procedures

Wild horses will not be herded over a distance of 10 miles. This distance may be reduced by the Authorized Officer after consideration of temperature, topography, soil type/condition, horse condition, or other pertinent factors. When trap locations are selected, they are placed in as close proximity to the horses as is practical. For this reason, it is imperative that actual trap site locations remain flexible to accommodate horse distribution.

Horses will be allowed to choose their own rate of travel, and the helicopter pilot will stay well away from the animals while maintaining visual contact. As the trap is approached, pressure from the helicopter will increase. When the horses are in the wings or near the mouth of the wings a "parada horse" will be released to lead them to the trap. Concurrent with this action, wranglers will follow the horses and encourage them into the trap and close the gate. Several herding runs may be made in a day.

A visual barrier of plastic snowfence will be placed on all gates and pens. This helps reduce the possibility of injury and, the visual barrier tends to settle the horses down in the pens.

Sorting in a trap will be minimized to the extent possible. Foals under 6 weeks old will be sorted off and hauled separately, then reunited with their mothers at the holding facility. If horses are sorted in the field, the field sorting/holding facility may be one of the traps. In this case, the horses

would be sorted by sex and age and the release horses would be held until the gather in the area is completed before they would be released. If the horses are not sorted in the field, they would be hauled to the Rock Springs holding/preparation facility for sorting and later hauled back to their respective HMA. In the case release horses gathered outside of the HMAs, they would be released into the Great Divide Basin HMA (Rock Springs Field Office) or Adobe Town HMA (Rawlins Field Office). As outlined in the proposed action, the Great Divide HMA would be reduced 40 head below the low range of AML to accommodate this action.

While herding bands having small foals, extra care will be exercised and operations monitored. At anytime a mare and foal start to fall behind the band, the mare and foal will be dropped. If the mare refuses to leave the band to stay with her foal, then the band will be left. If a foal becomes separated from its mother, every effort will be made to assure either capture or otherwise rejoining of the mare and foal.

Roping

The primary method for gathering wild horses in Wyoming is helicopter drive trapping. Roping may be used occasionally as a supplemental gathering technique under certain circumstances such as when a mare is captured but the foal is left behind, when a young horse refuses to enter the trap, or when there are escaped horses in an area of total removal (outside an HMA). In cases where more than occasional roping is anticipated, roping would proceed after consultation with the Field Manager.

Trap Sites

Established trap sites will normally be used. New trap sites will be established as deemed appropriate and surveyed for cultural values, and endangered, threatened, or sensitive plants and animals before the trap is constructed. Traps will be located away from active raptor nests and will not be constructed when soils are so saturated that resource damage would occur. In the event that resource damage does occur, it would be reclaimed. Traps will not be constructed in riparian areas or wilderness study areas. No new roads would be constructed and vehicle traffic would normally be restricted to existing roads and trails.

Trap Construction ,

Normally, traps will be constructed using 6-foot steel panels in 10- to 12-foot lengths. Three main catch/holding pens are normally constructed. A small pen separate from the main holding pens will be constructed to hold small foals or other animals with special handling requirements. Variations in trap design may be necessary based on site-specific requirements. Slide wooden gates are used in the loading alley to prevent injury. A portable loading chute will be used to load horses onto trucks. Trailers will be loaded by attaching panels to the existing loading alley for a trailer load area.

Wings will extend out from the trap for a variable distance depending upon the trap site. Normally, wings extend out from the trap 100 to 200 yards and are up to 100 yards in width at the mouth of the wings. A burlap like material called "jute" is suspended from steel fence posts placed 20 to 25 feet apart and provides the necessary visual barrier to direct the wild horses into the trap.

Fences or Other Hazards to Wild Horses

Although fences are not a major problem, they may be encountered during gathering operations. The pilot will be briefed and provided a map, in accordance with the aviation safety plan, showing all fence or other hazard locations (e.g., cliffs, steep washes, unfenced highway corridors, etc.) that could pose problems. The contract pilot currently in use in Rock Springs has approximately 20 years of herding experience in this area and is familiar with most fences and other hazards. If it should become necessary to move horses through fences to a trap, at least 30 feet of fence (or a fence gate if available) will be laid back and jute, black plastic, or other material that provides a visual barrier will be placed on each side where the wire is laid back. A small wing of jute will be placed out from the fence as is necessary to guide the horses through the fence.

Transportation

Straight deck stock trailers (semi), stock trucks, and horse trailers will be used to transport the horses from the trap site to a central holding facility. Contract trucks/trailers that are routinely used to haul wild horses may be used as needed. All equipment will be inspected prior to use and will be in good condition. Wood shavings will be used on flooring to help provide secure footing. All trailers and stock trucks will be loaded loose enough to ensure that if a horse should fall it will have enough room to regain its footing.

If the capacity of the Rock Springs facility is reached and additional adoptable horses need to be prepared (i.e. freeze marked, vaccinated, wormed and a Coggins Test for EIA), they may be shipped to the cooperating facility for preparation. This would require a wavier from the state veterinarian of the receiving state. The facility would be BLM-managed and routinely involved in the preparation and shipment of wild horses. Only wild horses aged 5 and under will be shipped to cooperating facilities. If horses are sorted in the field, then adoptable horses may be shipped directly from the field to a cooperating preparation/holding facility. If the horses are sorted at the Rock Springs facility, the horses selected for release will be hauled back to their respective HMAs and released upon completion of the gather in a specific HMA. As necessary, adoptable horses will then be shipped from Rock Springs to the cooperating facility as the capacity of the Rock Springs facility is reached.

Prepared animals may be transported to other approved facilities for temporary holding.

Corral Capacity

The capacity of the Rock Springs preparation/holding facility is 500 wild horses. To achieve the objectives of the proposed action, it may be necessary to use other preparation/holding facilities (i.e., Salt Lake City) as indicated. In addition, adoptable horses that are ready for adoption, (i.e., freeze marked, negative Coggins test, primary and booster vaccinations, and wormed) will need to be shipped east for adoption.

Sorting/Release of Non-selected Wild Horses

All captured wild horses to be removed will be screened against current guidelines under the selective removal policy. Any horses that must be returned to the range will be returned to the HMA from which they were captured, or in the case of wild horses captured from outside HMAs (North Baxter/Jack Morrow Hills or area south of I-80) would be returned to the Great Divide Basin

HMA or Adobe Town HMA (or other nearby HMA). Young wild horses, 5 years and younger, not selected for removal would be returned to their respective HMA.

Sorting may be done at a field sorting/holding facility constructed in the HMA or at the Rock Springs holding/preparation facility. Horses would be sorted by age and sex in accordance with the selective removal criteria.

Humane Destruction and Disposal

Any wild horse requiring destruction, as determined by the Authorized Officer, would be destroyed and disposed of in accordance with Instruction Memorandum 98-141. Humane destruction of wild horses is provided for in the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, as amended, Section 3 (b) 2 (A), 43 CFR 4730.1, and BLM Manual 4730 (*Destruction of Wild Horses and Burros and Disposal of their Remains*).

Branded and Claimed Horses

Branded and/or claimed horses will be transported to the preparation/holding facility at Rock Springs. Ownership would be determined under the estray laws of the State of Wyoming by a Wyoming Brand Inspector. Collection of gather fees and any appropriate trespass charges would be collected at the time of change of possession.

Gathering Areas

Gathering will begin no earlier than July 15, 1999, 45 days after the peak of foaling.

Great Divide Basin

Remove 306 excess wild horses. Includes 40 head below low point AML to accommodate release of non-selective horses from outside HMA horses. This will leave this HMA at the low point of AML.

The Great Divide Basin HMA covers approximately 772,915 acres including the Red Desert Basin north of Interstate 80.

The southern 75 percent of the HMA has 1-80 as its southern boundary and is mostly unfenced "checkerboard" lands. The northern 25 percent of the HMA is mostly solid block public lands with minor amounts of intermingled State and private lands. The northern boundary, along the Sweetwater River, is fenced. The western boundary is the unfenced west branch of the Continental Divide. The eastern boundary is the fenced boundary between the BLM Rock Springs and Rawlins Field Office areas.

The appropriate management level (AML) established for wild horses in the Great Divide Basin wild horse herd management area and agreed to by private landowners is set at 500 horses (415 - 600). BLM conducted aerial monitoring during March 1999 and counted 568 wild horses in the HMA. After the 1999 foaling season, the population is projected to be approximately 681 head. Exact locations of traps will depend, in part, on where the horses are when gathering is conducted. Captured, unadoptable horses will be returned to the HMA in accordance with the current Selective

Removal Policy. Approximately 40 horses gathered in the North Baxter/Jack Morrow Hills area, and not selected for removal, would be released in the Great Divide Basin HMA.

Permanent trap locations that may be used include:

12-Mile located in the SE1/4, section 28, T. 22 N., R. 100 W.
Rasmussen located in the NW1/4, section 17 T. 24 N., R. 98 W.

The 12-Mile trap is on checkerboard lands. The Rasmussen trap is north of the checkerboard lands. A total of six traps may be necessary depending on distribution and concentration of wild horses at the time of gathering and may be located in areas other than those described above.

Salt Wells Creek

Remove 690 excess wild horses. This will leave this HMA approximately 100 head above high point of AML. The Fort LaClede and Titsworth Gap areas are where gathering operations will be concentrated. The Salt Wells Creek herd management area covers approximately 1,193,283 acres south of Interstate 80. BLM counted 882 wild horses in this HMA in March of 1999 but estimate the population at 959. The 1999 post-foaling population is estimated at 1,151 wild horses. If every horse aged 5 and under is removed from this HMA, the low range of the AML will not be reached.

Permanent trap locations that may be used include:

Fort LaClede located in SWNE, Section 23, T. 17 N., R. 97 W.
Fort LaClede #2 located in SESE, Section 17, T. 16 N., R. 97 W.
Haystack located in SWNE, Section 27, T. 17 N., R. 96 W.
Titsworth Gap located in SWSW, Section 23, T. 15 N,. R. 104 W.
Gap Creek located in NWSE, Section 31, T. 14 N., R. 103 W.
Elk Butte located in SESW, Section 7, T. 14 N., R. 102 W.

A total of 8 traps may be necessary depending on distribution and concentrations of wild horses at the time of gathering and may be located in areas other than those described above.

White Mountain

Remove 289 excess wild horses. This herd will be at low point of AML, and some younger animals will be released.

The White Mountain HMA covers approximately 392,649 acres. It is a significant wild horse viewing area, since the horses are readily seen from Highway 191. The southern two-thirds of the HMA contains a large portion of checkerboard lands. The northern portion is primarily solid block public lands bordering the Eden Valley irrigation project (which along with the Big Sandy River, forms the northern boundary). The southern boundary (I-80), and the eastern boundary (Highway 191) are fenced. The western boundary is the Green River and is partially fenced.

The wild horse population in this herd management area has generally been maintained at the agreed appropriate management level of 250 since 1981 with some cyclic fluctuations. Gathers have been conducted since that time to maintain the wild horse population within the AML of 205 and 300. Wild horses will be selected for removal based on the Herd Management Area Plan and current

Selective Removal Policy. The lower end of the AML will be achieved if most 5 years and under wild horses are removed.

Permanent trap sites that may be used include:

Skunk Canyon located in NWNE, Section 11, T. 20 N., R. 107 W.
Starvation Wash located in SWSW, Section 17, T. 22 N., R. 107 W.
Stage Coach Draw located in NESE, Section 12, T. 23 N., R. 107 W.
Alkali Draw located in NENE, Section 10, T. 21 N., R. 106 W.
Green Canyon located in SESE, Section 26, T. 19 N., R. 107 W.

A total of 6 traps may be necessary depending on distribution and concentrations of wild horses at the time of gathering and may be located in areas other than those described above.

Little Colorado

Remove 113 excess wild horses. This will leave this HMA near the low point of AML. The Little Colorado HMA contains 519,541 acres and the eastern boundary follows Highway 191; the southern boundary follows the Big Sandy River west of Farson; the western boundary is the Green River; and the Field Office area boundary makes up the northern boundary. The AML range is between 69 and 100 head. Existing population numbers are estimated from the 1998 census. Captured unadoptable horses will be returned to this area in accordance with the current BLM selective removal policy.

Permanent trap sites that may be used include:

12-Mile Canyon located in NWSW, Section 2, T. 24 N., R. 109 W.
18-Mile Canyon located in NWNW, Section 3, T. 25 N., R. 109 W.
Cut-Off Road located in SESE, Section 14, T. 25 N., R. 109 W.
East Buckhorn located in NWNE, Section 14, T. 26 N., R. 110 W.

A total of 4 trap sites may be necessary depending on distribution and concentrations of wild horses at the time of gathering and may be located in areas other than those described above.

North Baxter/Jack Morrow Hills Area

Capture 183 wild horses. Approximately 40 older horses will be released in the Great Divide Basin HMA.

The North Baxter/Jack Morrow Hills area is outside any wild horse herd management areas. It lies north of Interstate 80 and is bounded on the west by Highway 191, north by Highway 28, and on the east by the western boundary of the Great Divide Basin wild horse herd management area. The March 1999 inventory counted 143 wild horses and estimated the number at 152. The projected post foaling 1999 population is 183. Total removal of all wild horses from the North Baxter/Jack Morrow Hills area will be attempted.

The following traps sites have been used in the past and may be used again include:

North Baxter located in NENE, Section 17, T. 20 N., R. 103 W.
North Baxter II located in SENE, Section 21, T. 20 N., R. 103 W.
North Pack Saddle located in NESE, Section 2, T. 25 N., R. 103 W.
Jack Morrow located in NENE, Section 32, T. 25 N., R. 102 W.

A total of 4 traps may be necessary depending on distribution and concentrations of wild horses at the time of gathering and may be located in areas other than those described above.

South of Interstate 80 (Rawlins Field Office)

Remove approximately 400 wild horses. Approximately 90 older horses would be released into the Adobe Town HMAs.

This area is outside any HMAs. It lies south of Interstate-80 and is bounded on the west by Highway 789, on the east by Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek HMAs. The February 1999 inventory counted 332 wild horses. Total removal of all wild horses from this area will be attempted. At least 10 trap sites will be necessary and more trap sites will likely be needed.

The following trap sites have been used in the past and may be used again include:

East Delany located in the SESE, Section 24, T. 18 N., R. 95 W.

Other traps may be placed at or near the following areas:

Coal Bank Lake, near Section 32, T. 18 N., R. 93 W.
Windmill Draw, near Section 26, T. 16 N., R. 94 W.
North Flat Top, near Section 1, T. 14 N., R. 93 W.
South Flat Top, near Section 9, T. 13 N., R. 92 W.
Pasture C, near Section 33, T. 13 N., R. 93 W.
Cherokee, near Section 36, T. 13 N., R. 95 W.
Ruedloff, near Section 35, T. 13 N., R. 96 W.

Other trap site locations may be necessary.

Handling Methods

Contract vs In-House

The horses will either be gathered with a contract crew, or an in-house BLM crew, or a combination of the two. Techniques and methods are essentially the same.

BLM Crew-Sorting Rock Springs

Employees: There will be one wrangler foreman and three wranglers most of the time. The wranglers will also serve as truck drivers. Some situations may call for additional personnel.

Methods: The daily capture will not normally exceed the number of wild horses that can be transported to Rock Springs preparation/holding facility. Additional contract trucks will be hired as needed. Wild horses will not be left in a trap overnight unless an emergency occurs. (e.g., truck breakdown, muddy roads, or other factors). The daily capture is carefully coordinated with available transport capability. The helicopter will be under contract to BLM and the pilot will provide a fuel truck and driver.

BLM Crew-Sorting in the Field

Employees: There will be one wrangler foreman and five wranglers most of the time. The wranglers will also serve as truck drivers for BLM equipment. Contract trucks will be hired as necessary. Operations will be seven days a week, most of the time. The additional personnel may be needed to field sort, and to water, feed and care for the horses.

Methods: A central holding facility will be constructed in the gather area. This facility will be used to sort horses, hold release horses, and hold adoptable horses pending shipment to a preparation/holding facility. The capability of providing feed and water is a necessity.

After a specific gather area is finished, the horses selected for release will be released from the facility. If natural barriers or other impediments might restrict the horses from returning to their "home range", then the horses will be transported for release.

Equipment

BLM: A semi-tractor and straight trailer with a capacity of 30 to 33 horses will be used. A stock truck, with a maximum of 14 head, will also be used. A one-ton flatbed truck and two-compartment 26-foot horse trailer can haul four saddle horses and up to six separated wild horses. This equipment will be used on most gathers. Other equipment may be used as needed.

Contract Crew Personnel: Normally, a contract crew is composed of a lead wrangler, up to 6 wranglers, a supervisor, and a helicopter pilot and fuel truck driver. Contracts are in place within BLM utilizing two different gather contractors. At the present time, Wyoming is not included under this contract. A contract modification would be necessary to include Wyoming, before a contractor could be used.

Veterinarian Services

A veterinarian will not normally be at the trap sites or field-built sorting facilities. Three contract veterinarians are available in Rock Springs and will be on call, should the need arise. The horses that are transported to Rock Springs for adoption or sorting are inspected by a veterinarian within 24 hours of the arrival. Should the need for a veterinarian arise before this time, they are locally available and will be called to assist or provide advice.

Public Interest

There may be filming by professional filming crews and photographers at trap sites. The Field Office Public Affairs Specialist or other BLM employees will assist in the control of these groups to ensure that they do not add unnecessary stress to the horses or interfere with the gathering

operations. Other requests will be considered as they are received. All media and other visitors will be expected to comply with the directions of a BLM employee assigned to this task.

Safety

All Rock Springs Field Office wild horse gathering safety procedures will be followed.

Aviation special use plan and U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Aircraft Service (OAS) Operational Procedures Memoranda will be followed. All flights will be in accordance with BLM aviation policy.

Passengers will not be allowed in the helicopter during gathering. Transport of other than BLM personnel, at other times, is strictly prohibited.

Only skilled, experienced personnel would be involved in the gathering operations, handling, and transportation of the horses.

Appendix B

Appendix B

Adobe Town Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA) With Associated Areas

Aerial Survey Summary
February 2nd, 3rd and 4th, 1999

Total Count

Area	Horses
Adobe Town HMA	685
East and South of HMA	154
Checkerboard	178
Salt Wells HMA (partial)	614
Colorado (South of Little Powder Mountain)	6
Total	**1637**

Adobe Town Wild Horse Herd Management Area
February 2nd, 3rd and 4th, 1999
AML=700; Range 610-800

Allotment		Horses
Willow Creek	(10528)	66
Sand Creek	(10525)	45
Rotten Springs	(10523)	16
Grindstone Springs	(10512)	28
Adobe Town	(10502)	50
Cow Creek	(10509)	102
Espitalier	(10511)	128
Crooked Wash	(10510)	23
Little Powder Mountain	(10519)	27
Powder Mountain	(10513)	0
Corson Springs	(Rock Springs)	26
Maneotis Crooked Wash		0
Continental	(10506)	39(E-34,W-5)
Red Creek	(10521)	36
Rock Springs	(within HMA)	99
Total		**685**

Area East and South of Adobe Town HMA-Primarily Public Land
February 2nd and 3rd, 1999
Outside the Herd Management Area

Allotment		Horses
Powder Rim	(10520)	32 (A-5, B-8, C-6, D-13)
Cherokee Trails	(00505)	15
South Flat Top	(10526)	37
Big Robber	(10504)	6
Mexican Flats	(10515)	51
South Barrel	(10525)	13
Mexican Graves	(10516)	0
TOTAL		**154**

Checkerboard Area West of Highway 789
February 3rd, 1999
(South of I-80)
Outside the Herd Areas

Allotment		Horses
Tipton	(10621)	5
South LaClede	(10610)	99
North Barrel Springs	(10611)	67
North LaClede	(10613)	7
TOTAL		**178**